

JFK: MOVIE AND MYTH

IT WAS AUGUST OF 1963 WHEN I MET LEE HARVEY OSWALD FOR THE FIRST AND LAST TIME. Now, almost twenty nine years later I am still seeing him in old TV and newsreel photos in Oliver Stone's controversial film JFK: still haunted by the same rodent features contorted by the pain of his fatal wound at the hands of that complete enigma, Jack Ruby.

It didn't take much rearranging for Oliver Stone to recreate New Orleans twenty five or thirty years ago for his film JFK, because New Orleans hasn't changed much in that time. Lafayette Square, where much of the exterior shots are filmed, from most angles looks exactly the way it did then. Although there are a lot of areas in New Orleans where nothing can be changed short of an act of Congress, or more specifically, the City Council, buildings and other landmarks tend to stay as they are. So when I went to see JFK, I did not feel jarred and dragged back into the past the way I was when I saw BUGSY a few days before.

It did however, carry me back to the day I met Lee Harvey Oswald in August of 1963, an incident I am sure would have been forgotten by me years ago had he not gained infamy and notoriety briefly several months later.

The summer of 1963 was unremarkable in most ways: it was hot and humid as New Orleans generally is during the summer, but it was a year of a Mosquito Plague, which came about all too often in the days before the city started spraying the surrounding swamps in 1965. Prior to that, any rainy spring yielded a bumper crop of mosquitoes by June. In the nineteenth century such summers decimated the population since the mosquitoes carried yellow fever, malaria and cholera, which were just memories among the aged and infirm by the summer of 1963, at which time they were just a nasty fact of life to be borne by staying indoors or inside screened porches. Swimming pool, barbecue and beach parties came to an abrupt end very early end in those years.

By August of 1963, I was working a clerical job in the business district and I had already had my two week vacation in July, spent at a family summer home on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, where my cousins, some friends and I had spent our entire vacation period racing from the house to someone's parents' air-conditioned cars since we were all just out of college or still in school and our cars did not come with such luxuries as a/c. We went sailing or bar hopping to Biloxi (which we called "whoring around" and although there were probably ten thousand prostitutes between Gulfport and Biloxi, we never seemed to find any that were below forty). Since I was still deep in the closet, I just drank a lot. We argued a lot about

politics, and we were evenly divided between those that thought that President Kennedy was a great man and those who thought he was a "nigger lovin' commie."

Towards the end of that summer, something had to go to the post office to meet a deadline and since the girl who generally made those late afternoon runs was on vacation, I volunteered just to get out of the office. That required me walking through Lafayette Square, upon which the Post Office faced. It got me out of the office at the end of long dull day and I was always curious about the guys who hung out there. Most of them were old bummy types since this was on the edge of skid row bars and flophouses, but there were always one or two guys my own age, just kind of hanging out. Watching the people go by, drinking beer out of paper sacks.

On this particular day, one guy was standing by the walk with his foot on a bench. He looked me over carefully and said hi. I said hi in return, and taking his foot off the bench he started walking along with me. He told me I had a nice suit on and asked me where I got it. It was a tan poplin suit that was of a type sold by most of the better stores in the area, I thanked him for the compliment and told him the store name. He told me that he hadn't had a suit since he was in high school but that he needed one to advance his career. I wondered what kind of career he had in mind but I never got around to asking.

He wasn't attractive at all, in fact he was what we would now call a nerdy type, but he was pleasant and complimentary.

His next sentence startled me. "You're really good looking - I bet you got a lot of girlfriends after you." I muttered something like, "not really" and changed direction so as not to be headed back to my office. He wasn't dirty or grubby, but rather clean. He had on wash khakis and a sport shirt of the cheap kind that had a flat-lying collar. His military type lace up shoes were shined, but still, this was not the way my friends from work or school dressed and I was getting very nervous. I wasn't sure what he wanted of me, but that line had been used on me before when I wandered the French Quarter alone during lunch hour. It was generally a prelude to an invitation to an apartment which ended up in sex. But I did not do that often, and I unless I were in front of Galatoire's or Antoine's, I could be reasonably sure that I wouldn't run into someone that I knew during the day in the French Quarter. Businessmen were not as adventurous as they are today, seeking out obscure little restaurants that are cheap and good.

But Lafayette Square was right out of the center of the business district, and I was afraid I would run into someone that I knew. It was hot and humid and being uptight, I started to sweat profusely. He suggested that I take off my coat and asked me if I wanted to cool off at his "room". "It's only

about a block away:" he said. I stumbled around trying to think of some thing to say. The idea of a room as opposed to an apartment did not sound particularly appealing to me, and although by that time I had gone with medical students, bank clerks and antique dealers, all of whom had more or less pretentious and fussy apartments, the raunchiness, the flophouse backdrop somehow appealed to me. Oh yes, I had been to a borderline flophouse with a marine on leave and his blowjob in a clean but plain room with chenille bedspread had me climbing the wall and rattling the iron bedstead.

He was interesting but not fascinating. His English was passable, a far cry above the cracker jargon one heard among the people who loitered in Lafayette Square.

Then he killed the whole deal. He said, "Can you lend me \$10? I'm a little behind on my rent and it'll make my landlord happy." I told him I didn't have \$10 on me (in the French Quarter in 1963, with beer costing as little as 35¢ for draft, 50¢ and 75¢ a bottle and parking \$1, my friends and I could spend an entire evening going from bar to bar, getting reasonably slopped up and still have a buck or so left over. I was certainly not going to spend \$10 for an afternoon in a flophouse; I had heard that there were such people who sold their bodies, but I had never encountered one before.) I told him that I had to get back to my office and he lowered his price - he said

that \$5 would probably make the landlord just as happy, but it was too late. I did an about face, told him that it had been nice talking to him and took a circuitous route back to my office. The whole experience left me vaguely unsettled since I had never been asked to come up with money before, and I was worried that someone I knew may have seen me.

A few days later, my sister, who was in graduate school at Tulane asked me if I had seen a man on the TV news who had been arrested by the police in a fracas concerning the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. I was not then and am still not a fan of TV news, with photogenic yuppies spouting cryptic scare phrases designed to have one believing that the whole world is coming to an end in the next few minutes, hoping to rivet one's attention while they run through scores of vaginal yeast, hemorrhoid and constipation commercials.

She proceeded to tell me that she had been to a party for the guy who had been arrested and furthermore that what he had to say made a lot of sense. I wasn't interested in fair play for Cuba, since I had already been there several times, and had seen the squalor in which the largely uneducated and ignorant population lived. I did not think that either the exploitative free enterprise system or the repressive communist system could help those unfortunate people, and I still have no idea how one can help the Latin American countries with their sharply

unequal divisions of wealth with the ruling class supported by the equally repressive Roman Catholic Church, entrenched in its position for the last five centuries.

My sister told me I was vapid and unconcerned with mankind and the following year went to UC-Berkley, where she met and married an American communist who was so opposed to the "Facist" government in the U.S. that during the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, he moved to Cuba where he lived and worked for several years. (Although he was a physicist of accomplishment, the Cuban bureaucracy assigned him to work in a facility endeavoring to set up a Cuban air-conditioning industry. While he was struggling with BTU output ratios, etc, the government complained about his lack of progress; they wanted to see what the completed machines would look like and they were totally dissatisfied with his utilitarian sketches - the Castro government wanted them to resemble the "cathedral style" radios which were in vogue in the U.S. in the thirties. Shortly thereafter he returned to the U.S. thoroughly disillusioned with Cuba, not with the Marxixt dream.)

In any case, several months later, on that fateful day in Dallas in November of 1963, the late evening news carried pictures Lee Harvey Oswald from childhood up until his arrest in the Fair Play for Cuba incident, conincidentally in front of the the International Trade Mart building, the organization and building put together by local businessman Clay Shaw.

Because they ran the photographs chronologically from his childhood, it was a few minutes before I recognized Oswald as the man who had struck up the conversation with me in Lafayette Square. I went into a total panic during which I pictured myself being identified with this heinous assassin and being led off to a federal prison. The feeling was awful, indescribable to one who has not lived the lie of a homosexual hiding in a heterosexual world. I didn't get to sleep until something like four in the morning. Even then I was stricken with the thought of a conspiracy at the highest level of government, to wit, the wheeler/dealer who stood most to gain by Kennedy's death, our vice-president, LBJ. But more about that later.

On Sunday morning I was nursing a hangover from heavy drinking as a result of the anxiety produced by my recognition of Lee Harvey Oswald as the man in Lafayette Square three months prior, when I saw him gunned down by Jack Ruby. New Orleans winters are quite temperate and through open windows I could hear neighbors calling to each other about the horror of it all.

Although the nation was in a state of shock for months after, I realized I was safe from ever being connected with Oswald. My life went back to its lazy, paranoid closet case existence.

In the ensuing years I began going to bars where I knew I could meet people of my own kind. As I moved up in my company, I began to meet a wider range of people through business, and among them was the founder and driving force of the International Trade Mart, Clay Shaw.

Clay Shaw was a known homosexual, but one would never have known it by looking at him. He was large (6'5" at least in height and probably weighed in at about 220) and physically imposing. He had the manner of a hard nosed businessman and other than the attacks on him by Jim Garrison, probably the greatest disservice ever done to him was the portrayal of him by Tommy Lee Jones in JFK. Jones, who does bear a certain facial resemblance to Shaw, plays him as an effete dilettente which Shaw certainly was not. Jones plays him as Dean Stockwell played the sadistic dope dealer in Blue Velvet, and at times one expects him in the courtroom to break out into a smirking lip-synch of Roy Orbison's "In Dreams".

This was not the Clay Shaw that any of us saw in his public life. He was practically the only known homosexual in New Orleans who was socially acceptable. By that I do not mean that he went to debutante balls and the like. Since he didn't have a wife or children, he probably wasn't interested in them. He did regularly attend the parties of leading business and civic leaders, sometimes escorting prominent unmarried or divorced ladies, but most often alone.

It was a known fact that he had an older gentlemen of means who was his mentor, as they said in polite circles, and they entertained together at their home or at joint parties in haut monde restaurants. No one ever saw them necking or waltzing together, and in fact, as I got more into the homosexual subculture and started hanging out in the bars regularly, I never saw him any place except in business places or large, basically straight parties in the French Quarter.

It might be wise for a moment to consider the social fabric of New Orleans in the sixties. New Orleans, like the other great ports of entry into the New World, New York and San Francisco, had a homosexual subculture going almost since their founding, but certainly after they became busy ports. With a subculture in which one could mix and meet, the old families and the newly rich families (because big families always have a variety of types) almost all had an uncle or cousin who was a confirmed bachelor, the euphemism of choice among the educated. The others were referred to by their families as being funny, but funny strange, not funny ha ha.

At a power lunch in which I was in attendance the name of Clay Shaw came up, and one uptight homophobe referred to him as "that queer". This gentleman had every reason to be uptight. His family was replete with several homosexual scandals, including an unfortunate suicide and the banishment

of one of the family members to the West Coast, where it was announced to those who inquired after him that he was in a mental institution. But one of the others at the luncheon, a prominent lawyer, interrupted the uptight one and said in reference to Clay Shaw, "No, what you mean to say is that he is a homosexual gentleman." The topic of conversation was quickly changed, and a strained feeling pervaded the rest of the lunch, which broke up earlier than usual, so everyone could rush back to their offices and relate this curious tale to their associates.

I mention this by way of contrast to the actual harrassment of homosexuals that was the standard order of the police department, whose methods of entrapment were notorious, even hilarious as recounted in Confederacy of Dunces. The worst incident was the matter of the Quorum Club.

The Quorum Club was a coffehouse on Esplanade Avenue, the lower boundary of the French Quarter. It was a place where a group of middle aged bohemians, painters and poet wannabees, students and school teachers hung out in the early sixties. Hardly radical by the standards of a few years later, the more or less informal gatherings discussed Anarchism and Syndicalism, Cubism and Expressionism, nudism and free love, Rilke and Nietzsche. It was not a place where people went to pick up others as at a singles bar, but rather a group who either thought of themselves as intellectuals or sought the company of persons

more intellectual than themselves. A few were retired schoolteachers but the majority were working ordinary jobs in the business community. Of a hardcore group of thirty regulars, perhaps four were homosexual.

The place had no particular reputation, but one night the New Orleans police raided it and arrested everyone for "Subversive activities", a charge which I believe was never accepted. The article in the afternoon paper described it as being a hangout for subversives and homosexuals. The only funny story to come out of the bust was that of the only homosexuals in the place that evening, two schoolteachers, who managed to escape through an extremely small window in the men's room when they realized what was coming down. They knew that the city would fire any public school teacher for any breach of propriety, no matter how minor. The tragedy of the story was that all the others (all straight) who were arrested were fired for being homosexual.

Shortly after Garrison's bringing charges against Clay Shaw, and announcing that he had incontrovertible evidence to convict Shaw on charges of conspiracy to assassinate the president, along with intimations that he had an entire theory of the plot to kill the president, the town was rife with rumor. Did Garrison have anything? Those who knew Clay Shaw were bewildered : he had never expressed any unusual animosity to

Kennedy or his programs, or certainly not like the uptown right-wingers who insisted that he should be impeached as an enemy of democracy and the government, or those who held that he had made deals with the Soviet Union in order to be elected. (Nobody implied that he had made deals with organized crime figures to win the West Virginia primary, which apparently he did.) Clay Shaw was not even the kind to tell the popular right wing jokes of the time, two of which stick in my memory : What did Kennedy say in his telegram to Krushchev after this winning the presidency? Answer (or presumed punchline) "We're in!". Also, a plane bearing Kennedy, Johnson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Adlai Stevenson and Hubert Humphrey crashed in Mid-Atlantic; who was saved? Answer (also presumed punchline): The American People! Ha Ha - clever there. Inane as they may seem now, that was representative of the right wing humor of the time. As far as I know, Shaw never stooped to such puerile humor, but if he had, I'm sure it would have come out at the trial.

But there were stories that Garrison's prime witness, Perry Raymond Russo, a sometime UNO student and full time self promotor, had somehow run afoul of the law, and had gone to Garrison with this conspiracy tale to weasle his way out. Perry Russo was a young, relatively attractive homosexual who always had new bizarre schemes to make himself a millionaire. My secretary of the time, who knew him slightly from UNO, but who had heard his myriad get-rich-quick-ideas from mutual friends,

pronounced him an "asshole", a term she didn't throw about except in the most serious circumstances.

Everyone had theories, but very few of them had anything to do with Garrison having discovered the plot to kill Kennedy. What everyone was wondering was why Garrison should come up with a plot whose central figure was the relatively innocuous Clay Shaw. In terms of the fact that Clay Shaw had some degree of social entre, a very important thing in New Orleans, then more so than now caused a whole lot of soul-searching. People, the right people, had invited Clay Shaw into their homes and had sat on boards with him. Jim Garrison, a recently elected district attorney, was a social nonentity. A lot of people had supported him for the office. He ran for that office as a sort of reform candidate. He had not accused his predecessor of being crooked or on the take ; he just said that he was a do -nothing D.A. What he said was true. The last few D.A.'s before him were do-nothing types. The police arrested scores of people (mostly black) every day, on all kinds of charges from public drunkenness to public nuisance . The DA's office didn't accept charges, if indeed charges were formally made, and what came to trial was more by chance than anything else. Garrison, an unknown, not even from this city or state, had no enemies and no ugly political machine backing him, got into office relatively easily.

After assuming office, Garrison kept his campaign promises. He straightened out the dockets so that there was some semblance of order. He accepted charges in criminal cases of merit and pursued them. He ran a taut ship and the black community in particular appreciated him. But he was still an unknown to the autocracy which picked candidates and saw them get elected.

Clay Shaw, on the other hand, who came from a small Louisiana town on the Mississippi border, through the connections of his "mentor" and his reputation as a highly decorated Marine Captain in World War II, had by means of civic work and his establishment of the International Trade Mart, had gotten to the outer circle of the power structure. Had he been straight, he was probably in a position to marry a sister or daughter of a prominent civic or social leader. He did not flaunt his homosexuality, but he didn't make any big effort to conceal it. Which made some people uncomfortable, but not enough to exclude him from the corridors of power. Some people thought that this single fact, Shaw's relatively strong position in a close-knit town, despite his obviously flawed social background, would be enough to make a person like Garrison, holding a relatively important public office while being ignored by the power structure, go after Shaw to prove his worth. In short, he would insinuate himself into the power structure after taking out its weakest member.

Since the beginning of the Clay Shaw affair, there have

been rumors, which continue to this day, that Garrison has had more than a passing interest in the homosexual subculture. At the time, as I was becoming more familiar with inner workings of the homosexual group, I met one of Clay Shaw's tenants in the Spanish Stables, Shaw's first important renovation of an historic building and one which remains as a monument to him and his influence in rejuvenating the residential French Quarter. Shaw's tenant, though not particularly a friend of his (he said Shaw was slow to make repairs unless it involved something which could be seen from the street) told me a story the gist of which follows. After the death of the older man with whom Shaw was involved, he became intimate with a much younger, attractive recent college graduate from a small town in another part of the state. Shaw saw himself in the younger man and took him on as his protege and moved him in. The younger man, who went by some typical Southern nickname like Boo or Bubba, was indeed bright and attractive, but he had a serious drinking problem. In the course of one of his drunken rambles, he ran afoul of the law and in the course of the proceedings found himself in contact with Garrison, whom eh tried to impress by stressing his importance in the life of Clay Shaw. By this report, Garrison was smitten at first sight, but Shaw had the upper hand, and from that moment on Garrison was looking for a method to bring down Shaw.

I heard this story from several of the Quarter drunks,

and while I was suspicious, because it sounded too facile, too easy an answer to this complex situation. Bear in mind, that mine was more than a passing interest, because while Garrison was dragging out all of these people in the presumed conspiracy, and stating or implying that they were homosexual, I was, as far as I knew at the time, the only person who knew that Oswald was at least a part-time male prostitute. Since that time I have found out that there were many others who knew him in that role: like me they were afraid to mention it to even their closest friends. On the humorous side is the story of a well known heir to a large Texas fortune who spent the entire time of the Garrison investigation and Shaw trial on the road, checking into a new hotel or motel each night under assumed names for fear that his connection to Oswald might come out and he would be subpoenaed. He was scared witless, even to the extent that he was traveling in his white Rolls-Royce with vanity plates, and could have been found very easily through the car which probably stood out like a sore thumb in Motel 6 parking lots.

In the course of business I met an FBI agent whom I took to lunch at Galatoire's, a French Quarter restaurant which is on most days very much like a private club. I had already realize its potential for advantageous business connections. The food is fantastic New Orleans cuisine and the drinks were very reasonable in the sixties. In any case, after a few drinks

and a couple of courses, I threw out to the FBI agent what I had heard about the reasons for the Garrison investigation. The agent looked at me like I was a complete idiot. I asked myself if I had gone too far. "Shall I say, in all discretion," he said sarcastically, "that that's the main theory in the Bureau at this time. In fact, it's all they have to go on.."

I was nearly satisfied with the conclusions that I could draw concerning the reasons for the Garrison investigation of Clay Shaw. This does not mean that I was entirely satisfied with the conclusions of the Warren Commission. Lee Harvey Oswald didn't come across to me as the kind of person who could get together a plot to kill the president - he just didn't seem to be the kind of person who could carry off what is now known as the "Crime of the Century". But his connection with Clay Shaw as a co-conspirator, knowing what I did of Shaw seemed unlikely at best. Shaw, so far as I could determine, held no extraordinarily right wing doctrinaire political position, and other than his playing local politics to promote his baby, the International Trade Mart, would not likely be involved in a conspiracy like the Kennedy assassination.

Furthermore, I doubted that Shaw would know someone like Lee Harvey Oswald. Presuming that they may have met in some homosexual party even seemed unlikely; hustlers that lived in rooming houses on Camp St tend to be on the extreme fringe

of an established homosexual community like that in the French Quarter in the sixties. They are the lowest form of homosexual life, and are generally known for lying , stealing and self deception. Several of Mr Garrison's best witnesses fell into this category, individuals whom he could have picked from a nearly inexhaustable array of this type in the Parish Prison, for whom perjury is a necessary virtue.

Clay Shaw, on the other hand, was the most prominent known homosexual in the city. Were he in need of younger companions, he could have had almost any one he wanted. He was distinguished, attractive, rich and perceived as more powerful than he probably was. His parties, and the parties that he attended were elegant and well-planned. The two just didn't seem to go together.

Still determined to find out as much as I could, I invited to Galtoire's a friend from college, who was at the time an assistant DA in Garrison's office. I know that he was suspicious when I first called him, since we had only seen each other a few times in the last few years. At lunch, when I brought up Garrison's name and referred to the ongoing investigation, he looked down at his turtle soup, and for a moment, I thought he was going to get up and walk out.

First he assured me that he was not in any way connected

with the Garrison investigation, that he was a minor cog in the machinery of the DA's office, and that if he were in on it, he couldn't discuss it with me.

"But let me tell you kind of person he is," he said and proceeded to recount the following story.

A few years earlier, in the first part of the Garrison administration, a small drugstore on St Claude Ave, a working class neighborhood, had been held up. There were only two people in the store at that time, the druggist and a twelve year old girl from the neighborhood. The gunman, in addition to threatening the druggist, threatened the girl, then with the cash in the register, left and sped away in an older car (a late fifties Pontiac, if memory serves me correctly). The druggist pulled a gun from beneath the counter, rushed out the door and fired a shot at the fleeing car. By the time the police got there, the druggist was badly rattled and the young girl was nearly hysterical.

I don't know if this is still standard procedure for the New Orleans Police Department at this time, but in those days a police unit would just go out to the trailer parks off the old Chef Highway (Highway 90), and round up anyone who had ever been arrested for armed robbery and put them into a lineup.

A couple of days later, the druggist and the young girl were brought to look at the lineups which had been assembled. The druggist and the young girl saw the lineups at different times. On the first try the druggist identified one of the lineup. The young girl said that she did not recognize any of them, but the ever-helpful police told her father that the druggist had made a positive identification.

The next day the girl's father called the police and told them that she thought she saw the man but was afraid to identify him for fear of later revenge. Her father brought her back for another lineup with the same people, and she picked out the same man as the druggist.

In due time the man was tried and convicted on the testimony of the two witnesses. He was shipped off to Angola for a few years of hard time, and the DA crowed about the fine work all had done.

About a year later, another drugstore holdup occurred and the robber was apprehended before escaping. In the routine interrogation (I presume) he was given a chance to cop a plea by pleading guilty, thus freeing the overloaded criminal courts docket and further consideration if he confessed to other crimes and helped them clear up old cases. He agreed and promptly confessed to the St Claude drugstore holdup. They were inclined

to disbelieve him and he was interrogated several times, and he maintained his guilt. People from the DA's office came by to hear his story, and they were also suspicious that he was trying to help out an old friend, or somesuch.

Garrison was duly apprised of the situation and he felt the same way - it was a trick; it had been an exemplary trial, they had a perfect case, they had presented it well, they had witnesses. The man was lying. It was their duty to discredit the confession. The assistant DA who was handling the mess was sent to interrogate the unfortunate confessor again. At this time, the second holdup man was adamant and irritated.

"Listen, " he said, "Not only did I do it, but I can prove it. When I was driving away, that crazy druggist bastard came running out and shot at me. He hit the car and left a bullet hole right below the bumper, just a few inches away from the gas tank. The crazy bastard could have killed me!"

The guy still had the same old car, and when the police checked it, the bullet hole, old and rusty, exactly corresponding to the caliber of the gun fired by the druggist, was precisely where they were told it would be.

This matter was brought up to DA Garrison, who raved and fumed. It was a perfect case, he was not going to back down.

His assistants insisted, they should contact the innocent man's court-appointed defense counsel and have him appeal on the basis of new evidence. Garrison went wild. They would do nothing. Such an admission would embarrass the DA's office forever. He personally would look like a fool. He was adamant. The man was lying. It was a plot to make him look foolish. A number of the new and idealistic assistant DAs were scandalized; something had to be done. Finally, a compromise was reached. The state attorney general was approached and it was arranged for the governor to issue a gubernatorial pardon to the innocent man. That way the DA's face was saved and justice was more or less served.

The assistant DA looked up from his lunch as he finished the story. "That tells you everything you need to know about Jim Garrison", he said with a smile.

The trial, when it finally got started, proved to be a farce from beginning to end. It dragged on for months while all sorts of unsavory characters came forward to say

say that they saw a man resembling Shaw talking to a man resembling Oswald, and even Perry Russo, Garrison's prime witness, waffled when he got onto the witness stand. It took the jury less than an hour to acquit Clay Shaw. In interviews with the jury, almost all agreed that their acquittal of Shaw did not imply their implicit belief in the Warren report, but none of them believed that Shaw was any part of the supposed plot.

In Jack Anderson's column of February 23, 1970, it was reported that Jim Garrison had made improper sexual advances to the son of a member of the New Orleans Athletic Club on those premises, but the affair was being hushed up. The New Orleans Times-Picayune, who generally carried Anderson's column, did not carry it that day.

But Clay Shaw was a ruined man. He had spent a half million on legal fees, and all of his property was mortgaged to the hilt. He had to go back to work. His health failed and he died at a relatively young age. Garrison went on to a judgeship in an appeals court, and at this writing, he is reported to be in extremely poor health. In the film *JFK*, he plays the part of Chief Justice Warren. He looks tired and sick.

Oliver Stone's film is a hodgepodge of half-truths and

bare-faced lies. I sincerely regret that Clay Shaw isn't around to sue his ass off. He implies that his reason for making the film is to keep the public aware that there are too many things we don't know about the murder of JFK. And he is right. The notion that there was a conspiracy lingers in our consciousness, because it seems so incredible that our young heroic president was felled by a lone looney.

If we accept his theory of the assassination of Kennedy, involving some 15 people on the spot, then we have to accept the next logical implication, that it was a plot involving important persons and agencies of the federal government, the CIA, for example, the military-industrial complex, perhaps even the vice presidency but in any case involving a large number of people. But there is one flaw in this scenario, and that is best put forth in a line in the film, when one of Garrison's assistants remarks that how could such a large conspiracy be kept quiet when they can't even prevent leaks from a group of twelve people.

Stone's sleight of hand in mixing real and horrifying film with shots made for the film in grainy newsreel style confuses the issue. But that is the least of his transgressions. The American people still want answers and Oliver Stone is giving them myth, but like the ancient Greeks who established an elaborate system of mythology to answer questions which they

could not comprehend. Myth is what we want to believe. It is unfortunate that there isn't a film board for honesty in films as there is in advertising, because, by any standards, the film should be labeled JFK: A CONSPIRACY MYTH.

OSW 41D in Paul D'Amico, from movie on subject home-synthetic



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